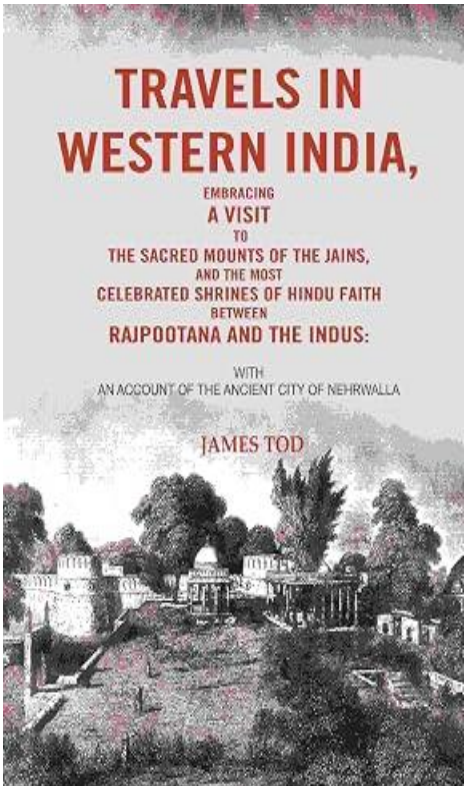

BOOK review –Dr.Laxman Singh Dev-James Tod's *Travels in Western India* was published in 1839, one year after his death. Tod initially served as a British Political Agent at the court of Scindia before spending an extended period in Rajasthan, ultimately becoming the figure responsible for popularizing the name "Rajasthan" for this region. His work, which primarily chronicles his travels across Rajasthan and Gujarat, brought widespread international recognition to Rajasthan's rich history and culture upon its release.

In this travelogue, Tod offers detailed observations on the geography, social structures, and cultural heritage of Sirohi and Udaipur. He documents the lush, fruit-bearing trees covering the Udaipur hills and provides rare insights into tribal life, noting, for instance, how member of the Balai community would occasionally don the attire of a priest to solemnize marriages among the Bhils. Tod also highlights the architectural grandeur of the Delwara and Ranakpur Jain temples and records the presence of Aghori ascetics in these regions, including a striking account where an Aghori requested a deceased body from a Rajput funeral procession for consumption. Moving toward Gujarat near Baroda, Tod records a settlement of people claiming descent from the medieval Huna invaders and notes the local tradition of the Jethwa community, who traced their origins to an island near the Red Sea. Additionally, Tod speculates without detailing his reasoning that the Yadavas, and possibly Lord Krishna himself, were originally associated with Buddhism.

Beyond Tod’s original observations, modern historiographical analysis offers valuable context to his writings. Tod’s work is deeply influenced by early 19th-century European Romanticism, which often led him to view the martial culture of Rajasthan through a lens of medieval European chivalry—a perspective that shaped his high praise of Rajput valor alongside his critiques of their internal feuds. Furthermore, while Tod was a pioneer in collecting local folklore, bardic chronicles (*khyats*), and epigraphic inscriptions, modern historians caution that his genealogical and historical assertions often blend oral myth with factual history. His speculative claims regarding the origins of the Jethwas or the Buddhist

ties of the Yadavas reflect the nascent state of Orientalist scholarship during his era, where comparative linguistics and mythography were still emerging fields. Despite these historical limitations, *Travels in Western India* remains an indispensable primary source for understanding early modern British interactions with western Indian society and culture.